
Value structures among Iranian and British students

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Abstract: Values play a very significant role in individuals' lives. People use their value structure in order to judge the world around them, connecting to other people according to their value priority similarities. People prefer to have relations with those who have similar values as themselves. Schwartz categorizes 10 main values that are comprehensive amongst all cultures. Schwartz believes that the roots of all values stem from these 10 values but the priority of importance varies for different people and various cultures. Considering previous research, the aim of this research is to study the value priorities among Iranian and British university students. 150 Iranian and British university students completed Schwartz's Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ). Findings reveal that the priority for Iranian students is Self-direction, Achievement, and Benevolence, with the least important value being Tradition. British students value Self-direction, Benevolence and also Universalism and Achievement at the same level. Much like the Iranian group, they value Tradition least. According to these findings globalization is changing the direction of value transmission from vertical (parents to children) to horizontal (from peers), even in different nations.

Keywords: Values, Value Priority, Value change, Value transmission

1. Introduction

Values are described as fundamental aspects of human's psychological structure and are apparently common among all humankind. Values are beliefs tied to emotion that have motivational roles in individuals' lives and people try to protect them. Values are also our judgment structure; we decide on people, actions and events according to how well it matches our own values (Schwartz, 2005A). In his previous research, Schwartz categorizes 10 different values; Self-direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, Power, Security, Conformity, Tradition, Benevolence and Universalism. His international research on the set of values clarifies that values are comprehensive among all cultures. Although there might be some additional values added to this set in some countries, they are emerged from the 10 main values in Schwartz's model (Schwartz, 2005B; Fischer, Vaclair, Fontaine & Schwartz, 2010).

Different relations between values can also exist, in that some values oppose each other (e.g. Benevolence and Power) while some others are compatible (e.g. Conformity and Security). People's life circumstances provide opportunities to pursue some of values more easily than other values, For example, wealthy people can pursue Power value more easily compared others (Bardi &

Goodwin, 2011).

In recent scientific studies of values, two important topics have been discussed which have hardly ever been addressed together; value change and value transmission (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Chao, 2001).

The term *value change* mostly deals with societal phenomena. Prominent work in the field emphasize on "modernization" and the overwhelming economic and political forces as the drivers of cultural (Inglehart 1990; 1997; Abramson & Inglehart, 1995; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Gunnoe et. Al., 2006).

Smith, Bond and Kagitcibasi illustrate that increasing contacts between different people from different cultures, may be pushing them towards developing multicultural nations rather than hegemonic monocultural nations (Smith et. al., 2006).

From 1960s many researchers dedicated attention to the term of "modernity". Their focus was mostly upon the imperatives created by the industrialization and urbanization of the society. For example, Kerr and Colleagues believed that the logic of industrialism will eventually lead all the people to a common society, where ideology does not matter anymore (Kerr et. Al, 1960).

In a research conducted by Inkeles and Smith about “modern” attributes among six nations experiencing economic development (Argentina, Chile, India, Israel, Nigeria and Pakistan), the following attributes were the most common ones. Such as:

- Achievement motivation
- Individualistic orientation
- Independence or self-reliance
- Tolerance of and respect for others
- Empathetic capacity (Inkeles& Smith, 1974).

All of the above attributes are somehow related to the 10 main values of Schwartz. Therefore the term value change relates to the social changes that are mostly following modernization, so it may be a normal process to happen among young people as they mostly tend to be more modern and up to date.

The term value transmission usually pertains to the socialization of values in institutions, predominantly in the family (Whitbeck & Gecas, 1988). It is suggested that in the social and cultural processes of value, value change and value transmission are interrelated but not strictly parallel processes (Boehnke, 2001; Moghaddam & Cristal, 1997).

Schönflug suggests that vertical (parent-offspring) and horizontal (peers) transmissions serve more challenging value units. Schönflug also clarifies that horizontally transmitted values are more beneficial in rapidly changing societies and parent-offspring transmissions do not necessarily support adaptation to different environments. Additionally, it has previously been mentioned that directions of transmission transport different transmission contents (e.g. personality traits and cognitive development by vertical direction, sexual behavior and Conformity by horizontal direction) (Cavalli & Feldman, 1981). These findings support the fundamentals of our hypothesis; offspring may prefer their peer values in order to adapt to the social environment and therefore their value priorities can differ from their parents’ values.

2. Research Question

With the above background in mind, the main question of this study is that are the value priorities of Iranian young generation, as an eastern collectivist society, and British young generation, as a western individualist society, different or similar.

3. Procedure

The sampling method was simple random sampling, participants were 75 students studying in Shahid Beheshti University of Tehran, Iran and 75 students from Royal Holloway University of London, in Britain. All the participants were young aged, 18 to 25. The mean age of the Iranian sub sample group was 20.65 years (Sd= 1.94) and 21.06 years for the British sample group (Sd= 1.75).

Values were measured using Schwartz’s Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ).

4. Results and Discussion

The priority for Iranian students is Self-direction, Achievement, and Benevolence, with the least important value being Tradition.

British students value Self-direction, Benevolence and also Universalism and Achievement at the same level. Much like the Iranian group, they value Tradition least.

Table1. Means and ranking of 10 value types for Iranian and British students.

Value Types	Iranians	Rank	British	Rank
Power	4.20 (1.02)	9	3.60 (0.82)	9
Achievement	4.67 (0.85)	2	4.64 (0.77)	3.5
Hedonism	4.51 (0.95)	5	4.46 (0.85)	5
Stimulation	4.43 (1.00)	7	4.27 (0.78)	7
Self-direction	4.99 (0.69)	1	4.91 (0.60)	1
Universalism	4.47 (0.82)	6	4.64 (0.70)	3.5
Benevolence	4.62 (0.78)	3	4.71 (0.72)	2
Tradition	3.39 (0.90)	10	3.46 (0.90)	10
Conformity	4.34 (0.89)	8	4.09 (0.77)	8
Security	4.55 (0.85)	4	4.36 (0.69)	6

NOTE: Standard deviations in parentheses.

5. Conclusion

According to previous research that shows Iranian and British university students have totally different value priorities compared to their parents (Abed, 2010), and findings of this research that shows value priority of Iranian and British university students are similar, it may be the effect of globalization and modernization that is changing the direction of value transmission from vertical (parents to children) to horizontal (from peers), even in different nations.

People’s tend to modernization and globalization is increasing specially in developing countries. As previous research also clarify that different nations (such as Argentina, Chile, India, Israel, Nigeria and Pakistan) with different cultures, value individualistic orientation and self-direction, respect for others and benevolence, achievement motivation and etc. as their priorities and as the signs of modernization (Ahn, Park & Kim, 2009; Knafo, 2003).

The study by Boehnke (2001) on value priorities in German university students shows that Self-direction and Achievement have higher means among German students. These findings also prove the fact that in today’s global village, despite their different cultures, young generation follow similar value priorities.

According to the fact that Iranians valued achievement as their second priority, but British people valued benevolence on the second, and universalism and achievement as their third priority, it seems that we can observe a reduce in effects of Iranian culture (which values benevolence) in Iran and it can be a topic of interest for

future research.

Finally, considering the rapid social and cultural change, and personal experiences of new generation about these changes, and also enhancement of between-cultural connections and easier access to worldwide information, joining the global community and being impressed by the peers in international levels, is an unavoidable reality. Therefore, increasing media knowledge and enhancing general information in this area, can prevent the probable side effects for societies.

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